

**Idaho Fish and Game Commission
Special Meeting August 23, 2018
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
600 South Walnut
Boise, Idaho**

August 23, 2018

MISCELLANEOUS

Opening Comments

Chairman Attebury called the meeting to order with Commissioners Corkill, Blanco, Fischer, Cameron, Clezie and Meyers present.

Presentation / Recognition

Michael Pearson, Chief, Administration, reported that last month Sue Bridwell in licensing received a personal note, certificate, and a US flag from a Lt. Colonel in recognition of her efforts to help him navigate the process for license options available for military individuals. Sue was honored by the Commission and thanked for her dedication and customer service provided to our troops both deployed overseas and stateside.

Executive Session

18-76 Commissioner Cameron moved and Commissioner Clezie seconded a motion to hold an executive session pursuant to Idaho Code 74-206 (1) (b) (d) and (f) to discuss personnel. Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Brad Corkill, Dan Blanco, Blake Fischer, Greg Cameron, Lane Clezie, Derick Attebury and Jerry Meyers.

18-77 Commissioner Corkill moved and Commissioner Clezie seconded a motion to come out of executive session with no action taken. All Commissioners voted in favor.

FISCAL

FY20 Budget Approval

Michael Pearson, Chief, Administration, provided an update and presented the state fiscal year 2020 Legislative Budget request for Commission approval (Appendix 51, Exhibit 51). The 2020 budget request package is due to the Governor's office on September 4, 2018.

18-78 Commissioner Fischer moved and Commissioner Cameron seconded a motion for approval of the State Fiscal Year 2020 budget request to the Governor's office as reviewed. All Commissioners voted in favor.

SEASON SETTING AND RULES

Season Setting: 2018 Sage-grouse Season

Ann Moser, Wildlife Staff Biologist, presented the proposals (Appendix 51, Exhibit 52).

Greater sage-grouse were a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act from 2010 until October 2, 2015, when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that listing sage-grouse as a threatened or endangered species was not warranted at this time.

On May 27, 2015, Idaho Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter signed *EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 2015-04 ADOPTING IDAHO’S SAGE-GROUSE MANAGEMENT PLAN*, which directs all executive agencies, to the extent consistent with existing state law, for relevant permits and policies, adopt the Governor’s Alternative and all supporting documentation. This plan requires continued careful monitoring of sage-grouse populations.

For actions not addressed in Idaho’s Sage-grouse Management Plan, such as hunting, the plan states that the 2006 Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho will continue to be in effect. Therefore, in 2018 the Department will continue to use the sage-grouse hunting season and bag-limit guidelines established in the 2006 state plan. Season frameworks are evaluated by comparing the 1996-2000 lek count averages (the beginning of intensified surveys and improving populations) to the most recent (2016-2018) three-year running averages. Lek route data in each of 14 Reporting Zones is evaluated and compared to the guidelines. The Commission sets sage-grouse hunting seasons in August, which allows managers time to evaluate lek data and determine whether wildfires or West Nile virus are affecting any sage-grouse populations in Idaho. Idaho’s season-setting process allows for annual evaluations at the local level that considers circumstances that can change annually.

Option	3-year running average of lek counts	Days	Daily Bag
Closed	Less than 100 males observed Lek counts are less than 50% of 1996-2000 average counts Adequate lek data are not gathered for the population	0	0
Restrictive	Lek counts are between 50% and 150% of the 1996-2000 average	7	1
Standard	Lek counts exceed 150% of the 1996-2000 average	23	2

Sage-grouse local working groups provided recommendations to their Region. A statewide press release was issued on proposed seasons. A notice asking for public input was posted on the Department’s website. Regions accepted public input or directed the public to provide input through the website.

Many stakeholders were involved in creating the 2006 Idaho Sage-grouse Plan. Trends of males on lek routes are the key parameter for selecting sage-grouse seasons. Statewide lek counts were down 18% from 2017 and 32% from 2016. Sage-grouse Reporting Zones 1, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 6,

7B, 7C, 7D, 8A, and 8B meet the restrictive season criteria. Zone 2 met the standard season category; the current three year average was 28.0 males per lek and the 150% value was 26.5. However, since the population was down 38% from 2016, the Region does not recommend the standard season for 2018.

Zone 5A (Greater Curlew Valley) qualifies for a closed season as <100 males were observed on leks in 4 of the last 5 years. The Commission closed Zone 5A in 2014 and the Region requests to continue that closure. Zone 5 meets the closed season criteria due to lack of sufficient long-term data and low population numbers in most of the area. The West Central area (Washington and Adams counties) has a small sage-grouse population that has been closed to hunting since 1984.

The Department recommends two new closures for 2018. The first closure is for area impacted by the 2015 Soda Fire. Counts of males on leks have declined from 160 birds in 2015 to 69 in 2018. In addition, recent information from radio-collared birds indicates this population is experiencing high mortality and may be isolated from the remainder of Owyhee County.

The second closure is for the area in and adjacent to sage-grouse habitat impacted by the Grassy Ridge Fire in Zone 6 in the Upper Snake. This fire burned about 110,000 acres in late July/early August 2018. There were 37 leks within the fire boundary, 25 of which were known to be currently occupied. In addition, several lek complexes to the south and southwest of the fire were already exhibiting concerning declines. Therefore, until we can gather further information about these declines and the impact of the Grassy Ridge Fire, the Department prefers to be cautious and recommends closing most of Zone 6 in the Upper Snake to hunting in 2018. That part of Zone 6 that is to the west of I15 and north of Highway 22 would remain open to hunting, as most leks in this area are stable to increasing.

18-79 Commissioner Meyers moved and Commissioner Blanco seconded a motion to adopt the staff recommendations for the 2018 sage-grouse hunting season. All Commissioners voted in favor.

Season Setting: Red Squirrel

Jeff Knetter, Upland Game & Migratory Bird Coordinator, presented.

Based on interest from the public, the Commission reclassified red squirrels to an upland game animal at their August 2017 meeting. This reclassification was formalized by the Legislature during the 2018 legislative session.

The Department provided an online comment period from July 13 – August 6; 51 individuals provided responses. Overall, respondents were in favor of establishing a hunting season for red squirrels.

Staff Recommendation:

The Department proposes a red squirrel season, concurrent with rabbit and hare seasons, as follows:

August 30 – March 31

Daily bag: 8

Possession: 24

18-80 Commissioner Corkill moved and Commissioner Clezie seconded a motion to adopt the staff recommendations for the 2018-2019 red squirrel hunting seasons. All Commissioners voted in favor.

Turkey LPH Rule Adoption

Jeff Knetter, Upland Game & Migratory Bird Coordinator presented.

In recent years, localized turkey populations have expanded and created depredation conflicts on private lands. In addition to turkey depredation issues, landowners who provide valuable turkey habitat in controlled hunt areas have expressed frustration at being unable to hunt turkeys on their own property because of low controlled hunt drawing odds.

The Department initiated formal rulemaking to create a rule to provide the Commission authority to establish Landowner Permission Hunts (LPH) for turkeys.

Idaho Code 36-104(b) 5(B) grants authority to the Commission to provide additional turkey tags to landowners who provide valuable habitat; however, Idaho Administrative Rule language is necessary for implementation.

Idaho Administrative Rule 13.01.09.100.03 establishes rules regarding the use of tags and permits for wild turkey.

The Department provided an online comment period from June 6 – June 27; 137 individuals provided responses. In general, respondents were in favor (68%) of establishing a framework for Landowner Permission Hunt (LPH) seasons for turkeys, but were not in favor (49%) of a minimum acreage of 40 acres for a landowner to receive LPH permission slips. Those who did not favor the 40-acre minimum offered a wide range of alternatives that ranged from just a few acres to over 160 acres.

Establishment of rules to allow creation of LPH hunts for turkeys would provide additional tools to the Department and landowners to help alleviate turkey depredation issues and increase social tolerance for turkey populations on private lands. It would also provide increased hunting opportunity for landowners who provide valuable turkey habitat in controlled hunt areas.

Staff recommends the Commission adopt the following proposed rule to allow establishment of LPH seasons for turkeys:

Proposed revision to 13.01.09.100.03:

100. TAGS, STAMPS, PERMITS, AND VALIDATIONS.

03. Wild Turkey.

d. Eligibility: The holders of valid hunting licenses are eligible to apply for controlled hunts subject to the following restrictions:

iii Any person applying for a landowner permission hunt must have a signed permission slip from a landowner who owns more than seventy-nine (79) acres in the hunt area. The permission slip must have the landowner's name and address on it along with the landowner's signature.

m. Landowner permission hunt tags will be sold first-come, first-served basis at the Headquarters or regional office of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game after March 20 and July 10.

18-81 Commissioner Fischer moved and Commissioner Cameron seconded a motion to adopt the proposed rule to establish LPH seasons for turkeys. All Commissioners voted in favor.

Extend Snare Check Time for Wolf Trapping in Unit 9 and Part of Unit 7
Information only

Sharon Kiefer, Deputy Director reported that its July 2018 meeting, the Commission directed the Department to draft a proposed rule for consideration and action at its August 23, 2018 meeting: to extend snare (lethal ground set) check time to 192 hours (8 days) for gray wolves, limited to that portion of Game Management Unit 7, including and upstream from the Gold Creek and Mosquito Creek drainages, and in Game Management Unit 9, and limited to the period from January 1 to February 15 to reduce possible conflicts with other people using those areas.

The Department was informed today that the rule request for this item was not approved by the Governor's office.

Deputy Director Kiefer reviewed the Proposed Negotiated Rulemaking Process: Rulemaking to give Commission authority to extend lethal trapping equipment check times in specific units via proclamation (Appendix 51, Exhibit 53). The Department will proceed with the negotiated rulemaking process.

Jon Rachael, State Wildlife Manager, provided a report on public comment for the proposed rule change. The proposed rule change for the wolf snare check period was posted on the Department's website August 8, initiating a comment period that was scheduled to end August 20. The Department extended the comment period by 17 hours to close end of business on August 21 because the web site was not available for approximately 8 hours during the final day of original comment period.

The Department received input from approximately 3,360 individuals regarding the proposed rule. Of those commenting, 3% (105) supported the proposal, 96% (3,241) were opposed, and <1% (14) with no opinion. Of the 423 Idaho residents providing input, 11% (46) supported the proposal, 89% (376) were opposed, and <1% (1) had no opinion.

Supporters of the proposed rule change indicated there are too many wolves in the state and additional wolf harvest was desirable, and that wolves wouldn't suffer because snares were lethal and therefore an extension to 8 days was reasonable.

Opponents of the rule who stated they participated in or otherwise supported trapping opposed the proposal for various reasons, including the potential increase in dead bycatch (elk, wolverine, moose, deer, fisher, etc.); some opponents asked the commission to consider changes to check rules from a broader trapping perspective (ranging from requests to keep the current check times or to requests to consider different/additional extensions of check times and some stating concerns about non-trapper perception). Other opponents (a combination for self-identified pro/neutral and anti-trappers) stated that snares are not always quickly lethal and that an extension of the trap check period would reduce the potential to release animals who would survive the shorter check time or would be counter to ethical dispatch of animals. Some commenters requested the trap check time be reduced instead of extended. Many opponents of the proposal opposed trapping or killing wolves in general.

MISCELLANEOUS

Refund Request

Sharon Kiefer, Deputy Director, presented the request to the Commission. In 2015, the Commission clarified their delegation of authority to the Director for responding to individual requests for rain checks, refunds, and other customer service accommodations for licenses, tags, and permits. The Delegation of Authority is attached.

A rain check request for a 2018 Controlled Hunt Moose tag, Hunt 3074, Controlled Hunt Area 69-1, 8/30-11/23 season dates) has been submitted by a disabled hunter because he has not been able to find an acceptable outfitter based on the hunter's perspective about an appropriate price for an outfitted hunt and outfitter interest to guide moose in this area. The disabled hunter acknowledges he has companions available to assist him in hunting relative to his disability.

As required, the rain check request was made prior to the start of the hunting season; the first inquiry from the hunter occurred on July 20. The Upper Snake Region did follow up with the hunter to provide some information about locations that could be productive to hunt moose.

As noted in the Delegation of Authority, resolving any request for a raincheck for a moose tag that is not related widespread environmental incident, such as fire where opportunity is severely limited, or illness, injury, or death which precludes any hunting related to a controlled hunt tag, must be resolved by the Commission.

18-82 Commissioner Fischer moved and Commissioner Corkill seconded a motion to not approve the request by Robert Schroeder for a rain check in 2019 for a controlled hunt moose tag in 2018 for hunt 3074 in Controlled Hunt Area 69-1. All Commissioners voted in favor.

LANDS

IDFG/IDL Access MOA

Ed Schriever, Deputy Director, presented the agreement to the Commission.

Background: The Commission has a long history of supporting and enhancing access to private and public property for lawful fishing, hunting, trapping and other wildlife-based recreation. The Commission's policy and financial commitments have underscored the importance of public access to Idahoans.

Changing dynamics in recent years in Idaho and nearby states have renewed our attention on the availability of public access. Changes in land ownership have resulted in closures or restrictions on long-standing public access areas; and traditions of public access are also shifting with increased access demands, as well as economic, cultural, and policy changes in agricultural and timber land management.

In 2017, significant public debate on the access issue influenced the creation and passage of HB 230. This legislation included additional set-aside funding for enhanced public access programs from a new license endorsement. The 2017 Legislature also provided a \$1M increase to the Department's base budget to secure and provide additional access through agreements and easements.

The issue of public access is not confined to private lands. The federal government granted Endowment Lands to the State of Idaho upon statehood, to be held in trust for designated beneficiaries, including public schools. The Land Board has the duty to manage Endowment Lands to maximize the long-term financial return to the Endowment Beneficiaries. Although Idahoans have a state constitutional right to hunt, trap and fish, and although Idaho has traditionally allowed public access to most Endowment lands, the Land Board's fiduciary responsibilities to Endowment beneficiaries come first. On August 21, 2018 the Land Board adopted a "Recreation Policy" to support the Board's ability to allow continued public recreational access to most Endowment Lands, consistent with the Board's duty for providing long-term financial return to Endowment Beneficiaries.

Department and IDL staff developed a draft agreement to help fund and support continued public recreational access on Endowment Lands while meeting Idaho Constitutional requirements for management of these Lands. The Commission has received a copy of the draft agreement approved by the Land Board on August 21, 2018 (subject to final formatting and addition of agency contact information).

18-83 Commissioner Clezie moved and Commissioner Meyers seconded a motion to approve the agreement with the Land board and authorize signature of the agreement in a form substantially similar to the draft the Commission has received. All Commissioners voted in favor.

REPORTS

Overview of Management for Wildlife Migration and Movement in Idaho

Gregg Servheen, Wildlife Program Coordinator, provided an overview of the management of wildlife migration and movement. Wildlife migration and movements are an increasingly

important management topic. Improved telemetry information, roadkill and observation data, and modeling are all helping refine our knowledge about wildlife migration and movement, from a landscape level to site-specific. As a result, we are increasingly aware of the importance of maintaining wildlife migration and movement and the need to manage for it in relation to human development and changing climate. The Department is increasing its efforts to advise, recommend, and support management actions that protect wildlife migration and movement so as to continue to provide harvestable surplus of animals and maintain genetically healthy and self-sustaining populations of Idaho's wildlife.

New Marketing Manager Introduction

Alan Kahn, Chief, Communications, introduced Ian Malepeai, Marketing Manager. Ian obtained a degree in Public & Private Sector Organization from Brown University, in Providence Rhode Island, where he was also a member of their Division I football team for 4 years. Ian comes to us with a diverse background, having spent summers working for the U.S. Forest Service, as General Manager/Director of Sales & Marketing/Head of Outfitters & Guiding all for the South Fork Lodge in Swan Valley. He has also held positions at the Idaho Department of Commerce as their Business Development Lead and most recently comes to us from Core Logic in Boise, where he was responsible for consultative selling of consumer credit reports to local lenders. Ian is an avid outdoorsman, a member of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, and participates in hunting, fishing, camping, skiing and biking.

White-tailed Deer Hunter Survey/Results

Jon Rachael, State Wildlife Manager, presented an overview of key results from the 2018 Statewide White-tailed Deer Hunter Survey (Appendix 51, Exhibit 54).

The Department's white-tailed deer management plan was implemented in 2005 and was intended to guide management decisions through at least 2014. The white-tailed deer management plan was the result of an extensive public input process in which deer hunters and landowners were surveyed to identify their preferences and highest priorities. In response, the Department continued to focus on general season over-the-counter hunting opportunities to ensure sportsmen would retain the opportunity to hunt with family and friends every year. Additionally, a new White-tailed Deer Tag was created to replace the Clearwater Deer Tag. The White-tailed deer tag is valid in all general season hunt units, but only for whitetails. The management plan also called for the maintenance of mature bucks in the population and established a statewide minimum objective that bucks with 5 or more points per antler would comprise at least 15% of the total annual buck harvest.

The Department initiated work in February 2018 to determine if preferences of white-tailed deer hunters have changed since the last major survey was conducted in 2003. Hunters were asked a series of questions pertaining to their hunting experiences and preferences. Questions were kept as similar as possible to the 2003 survey for comparison purposes. Hunters were asked specifically about their satisfaction with their 2017 hunting experience. Results of the survey were compared to the 2003 survey to determine if experiences and preferences have changed over time.

MISCELLANEOUS

Challenge Grant Announcement

Sharon Kiefer, Deputy Director, reported that the Fish and Game Commission authorized a Commission Community Challenge Grant (Challenge Grant) composed of 7 regional (\$10,000 each) and 1 statewide grant (\$30,000) to provide partnership opportunity to implement projects broadly supported by the local/statewide sportsman community and enhance fish and wildlife habitat, populations, or associated recreational opportunities.

The application period was May 15 through June 30, 2018. Upon request, an applicant for regional and the statewide grants was provided opportunity to address some technical and policy issues with their application and resubmit. Grant money is awarded for project expenditure during FY19: July 1, 2018 through June 1, 2019.

There were no applications for the Salmon Region. The Statewide committee will reconvene and make a decision on a selection for the \$10,000 still available for the program.

Regional and statewide selectin committee funding decisions:

Upper Snake Regional Grant Decision:

Pheasants Forever, Idaho Falls Chapter - \$10,000

Southeast Regional Grant Decision:

The Cariboo Conservancy - \$8,500.

The Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust - \$1,500.

Magic Valley Regional Grant Decision:

Trout Unlimited - \$2,500

Burley Bobcats Trap Team and Burley Trap and Sporting Clays - \$4,500

City of Burley- \$1,500

Jerome County Rod and Gun Club- \$1,500

Southwest Regional Grant Decision:

Valley County Shooting Range Foundation - \$5,000

Elmore Sportsman Association - \$5,000

Clearwater Regional Grant Decision

Foundation for Wildlife Management - \$10,000

Panhandle Regional Grant Decision

Foundation for Wildlife Management \$10,000

Statewide Grant Decision

Henry's Fork Foundation - \$26,935

Foundation for Wildlife Management - \$3,065

Outfitter Allocation Rule (IOGLB)

Brad Compton, Southwest Regional Supervisor, reported that this agenda item is at the request of Commission for information. Regional Supervisor Compton introduced Lori Thomason, Executive Director IOGLB and Susan Knappek. IDFG shares responsibilities with IOGLB. Ms. Knappek is the go to person representing the IOGLB.

In 1998, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game began allocating deer and elk tags to outfitters. The Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board distributes vouchers to outfitters qualified for allocated tags. The Licensing Board created a policy to distribute tags.

IDAPA 13.01.04.505 and 13.01.04.506 establish the allocation of deer and elk tags in capped zones in general hunts and controlled hunts and the allocation of tags to outfitters for sale to persons who have entered into an agreement to use the services of a licensed outfitter.

JMT Licensing System Update

Michael Pearson, Chief, Administration, provided an update to the Commission. The Department is working closely with JMT to resolve the issues discussed at the July meeting in Idaho Falls.

Adjourn



Derick Attebury
Chairman



Virgil Moore
Secretary